THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) In keeping with our policy to promote people-to-people contacts and greater interaction among scholars, intellectuals, writers, artists, businessmen and others, Government unilaterally eased issuance of visas to Pakistani nationals by taking the following decisions:

(i) the maximum number of places to which Pakistani nationals can travel during a visit to India has been increased from 8 to 12.

(ii) grant of one-year visas to eligible Pakistani businessmen whenever necessary, with a provision for different checkpoints for entry into and exit from India;

(iii) international airport at Chennai has been designated as an additional checkpoint for the arrival and departure of Pakistani nationals in addition to Delhi and Mumbai airports and the Attari railhead;

(iv) grant of exempt from police reporting (EPR) visas as far as possible to, inter alia, artists, journalists, students, businessmen, senior citizens and children;

(v) visa fees for, inter alia, senior citizens, artists, students and journalists have been waived;

(vi) provision to grant visas to elegible reputed Pakistani artists with the permission to give commercial performances;

(b) Government are not aware of any specific steps taken by Pakistan regarding its visa policy for Indian nationals.

Discussion for Revival of Nuclear Cooperation between India and USA

199. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether any discussion has been held between India and USA regarding revival of nuclear cooperation for peaceful uses which has been suspended since 1974 following explosion of nuclear device by India;

(b) if so, the details of discussions held; and

(c) the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) to (c) India and the United States have been engaged in a wide-ranging dialogue on bilateral, regional and global issues intended to broaden and deepen our mutually beneficial relations and identify areas of cooperation. Cooperation in some areas of science and technology including nuclear power generation have been discussed in a preliminary way as part of this wide-ranging dialogue.

Summoning of Indian Diplomat by Chinese Foreign Office

200. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a senior Indian diplomat in Beijing was summoned by the Chinese foreign office twice on the recent statement of the Indian Defence Minister on China;

(b) if so, whether China has lodged a formal protest; and

(c) the details of the events leading to the Chinese protest and the diplomatic initiatives taken to explain the correct Indian position?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE):

(a) to (c) During April-May, 1998, the Raksha Mantri had referred to China's military capabilities and potential, and reports concerning to China-Myanmar defence co-operation.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry conveyed to our Embassy officials in Beijing on April 16, 1998 and on May 6, 1998 that there had been improvement in Sino-Indian relations in recent years. They said that references in regard to China-

Myanmar relations were totally unfounded and hoped that the Indian Government would take necessary measures to prevent recurrence of such statements so as to facilitate the sound and smooth growth of Sino-Indian relations.

Government's policy is to develop a friendly, co-operative, good neighbourly and mutually beneficial relationship with China, our largest neighbour. We see our relationship as one in which the two sides would be responsive to each other's concerns. We remain committed to the process of dialogue to resolve outstanding differences.

Impact of Ghauri Missile on South Asian Diplomacy

201. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA:
SHRI SHIV CHARAN SINGH:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what has been the impact of Pakistan's success in developing Ghauri Missile on the peace of South Asian Region in general and India in particular; and

(b) in what manner Government propose to react thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) India is concerned about Pakistan's missile programme and its impact on the region's security. We are aware of consistent outside support to Pakistan in this field despite the existence of multilateral export control regimes, unilateral declarations of restraint and supply restrictions in supplier countries. Government remains fully committed to taking all necessary steps to effectively safeguard India's security and national interests.

Test firing of Ghauri Missile by Pak

202. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the report appearing in the Indian Express of April 7, 1998 to the effect that Pakistan has successfully test-fired a 1500 km Missile (Ghauri) on April 6, 1998;

(b) if so, what is Government's assessment about its fire range and the vulnerability caused to India's defence thereby; and

(c) what is Government's reaction thereto by way of raising matching defences?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) Yes, madam. Government have seen press reports about the officially claimed test firing of an intermediate range missile by Pakistan.

(b) It is assessed that Pakistan has acquired missile capability of at least a range of 800 kms.

(c) Government closely monitors all developments including those relating to Pakistan's missile programme. India is deeply concerned over Pakistan's missile programme and its impact on the region's security. Government of India is committed to taking all necessary steps to effectively safeguard its security and national interests in accordance with its own threat perceptions.

Statement of Pakistani Nuclear Scientist regarding Pak Missiles

203. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the reported statement of the Pakistani Nuclear Scientist Mr. Abdul Qadeer Khan appearing in the Pioneer of April 16, 1998, denying that Pakistan had acquired foreign technology for Ghauri and claiming that Pakistan had a series of such missiles at different stages of development, and could shortly produce even more powerful missiles;

(b) if so, whether Government have reviewed its missiles and nuclear programme and policy in view thereof; and

(c) if so, what is the outcome?